

Rosemary

by Eclectic Butterfly

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Summary: Rosemary Lawson had no desire to leave San Francisco, but her father wanted to mine for silver. This brave young woman's life changes in ways she never expected, and she finds friends in the most unlikely of places. Based on S1E5: Enter Mark Twain

1. Chapter 1

A/N:** The first time I saw Enter Mark Twain, my imagination was caught by Rosemary Lawson. I was unhappy that her character's story was left unresolved at the end of the episode. Unwilling to allow this brave young woman to be merely a plot device, I took it upon myself to tell what I imagine her story to be. It ended up longer than I expected and I hope you enjoy it! ******

On a more personal note, please see the message on my profile.****

* * *

><p>The day my father told me we were going to mine for silver, my first thought was that he was joking. After all, why would he want to leave the comfortable life we had in San Francisco? He had his teaching job at the boys' school and had always seemed to really enjoy instructing his students. We wanted for nothing and, in fact, had a more comfortable life than many could claim.<p>

"When should I have the bags packed?" I responded, bustling around our tiny kitchen. I had been kept longer at the orphanage than I had intended and was extremely grateful I had had the foresight to put together a stew in the morning. I tasted it, savoring the rich taste that had been simmering all day. "Mmm. Perfect."

"Oh, I imagine a month from now will give us plenty of time to get everything we need for the journey and to sell what we don't need here," Daddy answered in an off hand way.

That specific time frame and the mention of selling our belongings gave me pause. Frowning, I glanced over my shoulder. My father was sitting at the table, surrounded by essays he was supposed to be grading. In his hand was a small flyer and he was giving it all his attention, instead of the work of his students.

"You're not serious," I said, unable to think of anything else to say. How could he be serious? Being in San Francisco was the only life I had ever known. "There's no silver to mine in San Francisco."

"Obviously we'll have to go where there are silver mines," Daddy responded, patiently. "Virginia City in the Nevada territory is where all of the action is taking place these days, Rosie girl. We'd be fools not to take advantage of it when it's really not that far away."

Oh, dear. This was more serious than I'd thought. "Daddy, you haven't been reading more of those silly flyers, have you?" I asked, walking over to his side. I took the flyer from his hand, scanned it, and then crumpled the paper. "You have always said these things are made up of more lies than the truth."

"Rosemary Kathleen Lawson!" my father protested, prying the now wrinkled paper from me. He smoothed it out. "I've heard it from several reliable sources. Of course I know the flyers exaggerate things, just a bit, but there is silver to be found. And I want to be part of it."

"But...why?" I asked. I didn't understand. Never before had Father even mentioned wanting to mine for a precious metal. He'd been content with teaching, or so I had always believed. I collapsed into the other chair at the table and reached out to curl my fingers around his. "Daddy, why?"

Daddy squeezed my fingers a moment before gently pulling free. "Haven't you ever dreamed of doing something more, Rosie girl?" he asked. "To see what life is like outside of tall buildings?"

He knew I had, but that's all it had ever been: a dream to think about late at night. Along with the beauty of the mountains and the claims of wealth to just be picked up as you walked along, I'd heard what life was like in those mining towns with rough men, no reliable lawmen, and no respectable women. How could the beauty possible outweigh the bad?

"This isn't just something you're considering, is it?" I asked hopefully. Maybe there was a chance I could talk him out of it, that I could appeal to his friends in the academic field to talk some sense into him. "I know it sounds appealing, but surely there are some dreams that aren't meant to be."

"Never trying is the surest way to fail, Rosie," he responded. "I've made up my mind. Think of the better life we could have, once we have the silver. We'll be a part of making history."

"Daddy, please," I begged desperately. "Would Mama have wanted this?"

Maybe it was cruel of me to bring my mother into it. It had been only five years since she'd passed away from a fever and I missed her everyday. I knew Daddy did too. She'd been such a kind and sweet woman. Everyone who met her had adored her and they all mourned with Daddy and I when she passed on.

I could see the distant grief cross my father's face. "Yes, she would have," he insisted, shaking his head. His tone strengthened into one of determination. "Now don't argue with me anymore, Rosemary. I've already started the arrangements and given notice at the school."

Shocked at the finality of his statement, I stared at him.
"Daddy-!"

"Enough, Rosemary!"

With a flinch, I pushed myself out of my chair. I walked out of the kitchen and into my room. I did not slam my door; I was old enough to keep from that display of childishness. However, I did throw myself onto my bed and buried my face into my pillow.

In one month, I would have to leave my home, my friends, and everything I had ever known. Part of me was furious with my father for not giving me more warning, but I did understand why he didn't. He must have known I would not take well to the news, which then begged the question of why he was insisting on going ahead with the venture.

Angry tears soaked my pillow that night and I did not leave my room to serve supper to Daddy. I could only assume he dished his stew himself or that he was so distracted by his new plans he forgot to eat.

I felt like my life had been thoroughly ruined.

* * *

><p>Daddy left earlier than usual the next morning. I didn't make him breakfast, still feeling a little mutinous. That was my childish response, and I knew I was being unreasonable. He could get his own coffee and pack his own lunch pail for once.

When I finally deigned to leave my room, I found a half burnt pot of stew on the stove where I had left it and had to toss all of the contents out. I then spent over an hour getting the pot cleaned. I knew, deep down, that it was my fault but it was just another mark against Daddy's crazy scheme. I put all of my anger and frustration into scrubbing the sides of the pot.

I needed to keep busy so near noon I left the apartment perfectly clean and made my way to the one place that I knew would always need an extra pair of hands: the orphanage. Strange as it may seem, the constant chatter of children's voices soothed me. The group of girls who exclaimed welcomes when they saw me touched my heart as always.

"Miss Lawson, I didn't think this is your usual days to come in."

A blush heated my cheeks as I looked up. Joshua Peters, the young,

dark haired teacher who worked at the orphanage, was smiling at me. "It's not, Mr. Peters," I said as one of the girl's tugged on my hand to get my attention. "But here I am anyway."

He chuckled and nodded. "I think we will have to talk more about this later. It looks as though you're wanted."

The giggling girls pulled me away from Mr. Peters before I could form a response to that. I managed to send them off to get cleaned up for lunch and made my way to the kitchen. Mrs. Dawson, who ran the orphanage, was there, supervising the cook.

"Hello, Mrs. Dawson," I greeted when both women faced with surprised expressions. "Is there something I can do? I need to keep busy."

Mrs. Dawson, a woman I had known for most of my life who had been my mother's best friend, frowned in concern. "Yes, of course, Rosemary," she answered. "The younger ones will need to be put down for their nap." She patted my shoulder. "We can talk later if you want."

I nodded, relieved I had someone I could confide in. There were twenty toddlers who were too young to attend school and, as usual, every one of them resisted nap time. The hour it took for me to get all of them asleep left me more tired than any other day. Perhaps because I hadn't slept the night before.

A cup of coffee was waiting for me in Mrs. Dawson's office. "Out with it," the woman said when I sank into a chair opposite her. "You look awful, Rosemary. Tell me what's happened."

"Last night, my father has informed me that in a month, we are leaving San Francisco," I told her slowly. Somehow, saying it out loud, made it even more real. "He wants to mine silver in Virginia City."

Blinking, Mrs. Dawson set her cup down. "You're not serious."

"That's exactly what I said," I told her with a half-hearted laugh. I sipped my coffee, savoring the hot liquid. "I'm afraid my father is very serious. He has his heart set on mining silver. He's already started the arrangements and there wasn't a thing I could say to reason with him."

"And he's never said anything about this before?"

Shaking my head, I heaved a sigh. "Not a word," I answered. "I don't know what to do. I've heard such horrible things about the territory Virginia City is in, the violence and the criminals. How am I supposed to survive there?"

My friend reached over to pat my hand. "I have every confidence that you can survive whatever life throws at you," she told me. She hesitated for a moment and then asked, "Have you considered staying in San Francisco?"

Startled, I looked up. "What? Stay while my father leaves?" Honestly, the thought hadn't even occurred to me. "I couldn't! A young woman on her own? What would I possibly do to support myself? It's just

impossible, Mrs. Dawson."

"No, I suppose it was a crazy idea," Mrs. Dawson admitted with a sigh. "I'd offer to make room for you here but it's already so crowded."

"I understand," I told her. "I can't imagine not seeing this place again."

"This place or a certain Mr. Peters?"

My cheeks burned with embarrassment. "Mrs. Dawson!" I protested in a horrified whisper. "Mr. Peters is a very kind friend and that is all. He has never indicated that he wishes anything more than friendship."

Had I hoped for more? Certainly! But that was beside the point.

"Maybe if you gave him some encouragement?"

Emphatically, I shook my head. "I've seen what some girls consider 'encouraging' and I refuse to sink to that level," I told her. Heaving a sigh, I leaned back in my chair. "I suppose there is no other alternative. I will go with my father to the silver mines."

Mrs. Dawson shook her head. "It's not right. I've heard the stories from those mining fields. I cannot believe your father thinks it is the place to take you."

While it was a relief to be with someone who shared my opinion, there was a small part of me that rebelled against hearing Daddy spoken of in such a manner. "I suppose he believes he knows what is best, Mrs. Dawson," I said, forcing a smile. "I am probably overthinking this, and worrying over nothing. Thank you for hearing me out."

"I am delighted to do so, Rosemary," Mrs. Dawson responded, concern causing a crease between her eyes. "Your mother would have been so proud of you."

Mrs. Dawson was one of the few left who had known my mother. In fact, she had worked with my mother here in the orphanage. Hopefully, I met her gaze. "You really think so?"

"Of course. You're a good and dutiful girl. Any mother would be proud to claim you."

A blush heated up my cheeks. I finished my coffee and rose from the chair. "I ought to return home," I said. "I left it in such a state!"

The older woman laughed lightly and shook her head. "You had good reason to be out of sorts, and I'm sure once you have had the chance to discuss this with your father, you will find it not such a horrible future," she said, though there was no confidence in her voice. "As soon as you know more, you must be sure you tell me." my coffee and got to my feet. "I suppose I should get home. Daddy is going to need dinner."

"Of course."

2. Chapter 2

**A/N: Thank you, everyone, for your well wishes! They really help me get through the bad days. :) Oh, and I should mention I took a few liberties with the story as told in the episode. You'll understand when you see them. Enjoy!**

* * *

><p>Father made no mention of my minor rebellion when he returned home. As I set out the meager dinner I had managed to scrape together, he needed no encouragement to explain the details of his plan to move to the silver mines. Drawing on every bit of patience I had, I sat and listened to him.<p>

He had plans for the wagon we would take and the supplies we would need to gather. He had a specific route drawn out on a map, part of which included portions of the Truckee Trail. I couldn't help but wonder how long he had been planning this, and felt a little hurt that he hadn't confided in me sooner.

Given my reaction to the news, though, I couldn't really blame him for keeping it to himself.

With resignation, I began to pack up our belongings. Daddy advised me to part with many 'non-essentials', as he called them. My heart grew heavy as I began setting aside many of the books that made up our library. As dearly as I loved the volumes, it would be far too hard to carry them all the way into the wilderness and so I resolved to donate them to the orphanage.

A few 'non-essentials' I flat out refused to dispose of, namely my mother's china set and the mantle clock. These I wrapped up carefully in a trunk and prayed they would survive the journey. Daddy made no objection after his initial frown of disapproval. My plea of needing some family heirloom to remember my mother by was all I needed to say.

The news of Daddy's plan spread quickly. Many of our acquaintances tried to talk him out of it. I held my tongue as I listened to their reasoning and logic: hundreds abandon the mining life and come to San Francisco, so why leave a good life; what kind of father would take his only daughter into mining fields; my father was not as young as he used to be and mining was work for the young.

Through it all, my father maintained that he had considered all sides of the issue and he was not going to change his mind. A large part of me always hoped someone would have something Daddy hadn't thought of and convince him to abandon the idea. As the date of our departure drew closer, though, fewer people tried to argue and instead began wishing us luck.

With so much to do, I bid farewell to the children and my friends at the orphanage several weeks before Daddy and I were to leave. I couldn't hold back the tears at the wails from the littlest ones. Mrs. Dawson pursed her lips as she hugged me, still disapproving of the change. Mr. Peters shook my hand, hesitated for a long moment,

and then wished me well.

I went home and cried for an hour.

* * *

><p>Looking over my shoulder, I watched the city fade into the darkness. The early morning start was a mixed blessing. I wouldn't have to see my home in the daylight, but a part of me yearned for that last view of San Francisco. Who knew if I would ever see it again?<p>

We didn't get far at all that first day. Daddy struggled to keep the oxen under control. He'd never been an outdoors kind of person but he was determined. I keep biting my tongue as I tried to help. Cooking over a fire was a novel experience for me that night, and I'm afraid I burned everything. My feet ached from walking, the only activity to break up the monotony of riding on an uncomfortably hard wagon bench.

There was no denying that the stars were beautiful, and I spent more than an hour just looking up at the sky. Daddy hummed some of his favorite old songs like Shenandoah, Lily Dale, and Annie Lawry. For the first time, I felt at peace about the whole venture and I went to sleep with more confidence about what we were doing.

As the days went on, Daddy became better with the wagon. We met many people who had abandoned their interest in mining and were making their way to California in search of a better life for their families. Of course, that did nothing to dampen my father's enthusiasm for the mining life. In fact, it only seemed to bolster his spirits and feed his enthusiasm.

Every evening, after we'd set up camp and I managed some kind of meal, Daddy would sing the old songs while I watched the stars. My anger over the situation drained away the further into the mountains we went. How could I possibly be angry with such beautiful scenery surrounding me?

We traveled for over a week, going higher and higher in the mountains. My ability to cook over open flames improved with each night, and when we shared our camp with other travelers who were heading to San Francisco, I was able to pick up some pointers from those with more experience. Father's pride in me pleased me but I tried not to let him know it.

And then we reached the Truckee River. "We're almost there, Rosie girl," Father declared when he finished setting up camp. "It won't be long now."

For some reason, I felt as though we were being watched and I cast uneasy glances at the growing darkness. "Virginia City?" I asked, trying to act as though everything were fine. I tried to focus on the pot of bubbling stew, the one thing I could do well over the fire. "We're that close?"

Eagerly, Daddy nodded. "Those last travelers we passed said the silver is there for the taking. Our future will be set."

I raised my eyebrow as I looked up. Our futures had been secure

enough in San Francisco. "If it's so easy to mine, then how do you account for them abandoning it? Some of those men looked desperate."

"Some people have no patience."

He was so irrepressibly optimistic. Shaking my head, I ladled the stew into the tin pan that served as our dinnerware. As soon as he had eaten, he went to the water's edge for a closer look at the river, leaving me to clean up. Once I had everything out away as it should be, I joined him to watch the glow of the setting sun vanish from the water's surface.

As he had done every night, Daddy sang as he sat by the fire. When it grew dark, I crawled into my bed in the wagon to listen in comfort. Staring up at the canvas, I thought about how much my life had changed. I never would have imagined I could be happy cooking over a campfire, constantly smelling of wood smoke, or feel so exhausted. The journey had changed my outlook on life, and I found I felt ready to take up the challenge of surviving a mining town.

Maybe I would even find a handsome miner to call my own.

It was with this pleasant, though impossibly romantic, idea on my mind I closed my eyes. And that's when my life changed again. This time, it was far worse than anything I could have ever imagined.

There was the snap of a twig that comes from someone stepping on it. "Can I help you, gentlemen?" I heard Daddy say, his tone holding a suspicious note I had never heard from him before. All hint of sleepiness fled as I sat up. Trunks and supplies blocked my vision of what was happening.

"We were just passing by, and saw your fire," an unfamiliar voice said. "Mind if we sit a spell?"

"Be my guest," Daddy invited. His voice was louder than necessary, and I knew he was trying to warn me. He had a gun on him, I knew, but I had never seen him shoot it. Would he be able to defend himself if necessary? This had been a constant worry of mine that I had tried to keep to myself. "You fellows are traveling awful late, aren't you?"

How many of them were out there? As silently as possible, I searched for something I could use as a weapon. Not that I would show myself unless there was no other choice. I was in my nightgown, and it would be highly inappropriate to jump out like an amazon woman. With one hand, I searched for my dress, finding only Daddy's spare clothes.

The next sound I heard echoed in the silence of the night: the loud crack of a gunshot. My heart in my throat, I pressed my hand over my mouth to keep myself from screaming as there was an answering thud.

"Why did you have to do that, Mack?" a second voice asked, his words slurring together. "An old man like him couldn't have done us any harm."

Panic and shock was all I felt as my mind tried to wrap itself around the sounds it was hearing. "See if he has any food around," the first voice said, sounding uncaring that he had just shot someone. "I haven't heard a sound from the wagon but I doubt an old man like this would be out here alone."

He was coming towards the wagon. I had to _move. _Not caring how much noise I made, I scrambled for the front of the wagon. I knew all too well what would happen if these two caught me and I intended to do all I could to prevent that fate. An angry shout followed me as I made it over the bench. With Daddy's clothes still in my hand, I jumped to the ground and bolted into the trees.

"Girl! Come back here!"

That shout was accompanied by a gunshot. A squeak left my lips as splinters of wood flew through the air next to my head. Trying to keep my bearings, I angled around until I reached the edge of the Truckee River. Hearing crashing in the trees, I plunged into the cold water, going in until the water reached my waist. I kept the clothes over my head.

"Where did she go?" the second, drunk man asked.

"Into the river," the first said. Their voices carried easily over the water. Shivering, I held still, trying to keep my footing in the moving water. "There's nowhere for you to go! Either you'll drown in the river or you'll be eaten alive."

Flinching, I stared at the bank of the river. My eyes had finally adjusted to the darkness, and I thought I could make out two figures outlined against the trees. One of them threw something on the ground, yelling words I had never heard before. The second made a move to enter the river, and I retreated until the water came up to my chin.

The cold seemed to deter him. When they finally moved away and vanished into the trees, I couldn't feel my toes.

Trembling violently and gasping for breath, I stumbled to the bank. I collapsed onto the rocks and dirt.. What was I going to do? I may have escaped them temporarily, but now there was a whole different set of problems. Where could I go? The only thing I knew for sure was I needed to get out of the wilderness.

Tears filled my eyes as I thought of my father, but I had to push it aside to deal with the present. Grief and mourning would have to happen later.

My hands shook as I pulled off my sopping wet nightgown and dropped it on the ground. The hoot of an owl made me start as I dressed in my father's clothes. Far too big, they were warmer than my wet clothes. I tossed my nightgown into the river, knowing it would be swept away.

Wet though they were, I knew my wool socks were better than nothing and kept them on. Recognizing the need to move quickly, I closed my eyes, trying to remember what I had seen of Papa's map. As many times as I had seen it, I hadn't paid as much attention as I wished I had. I would just have to start moving and hope I was going the right

way.

Virginia City was my only hope.

Only a few feet away, I found a hat, presumably the item one of the men had thrown in his anger. I wrinkled my nose at the worn, grimy leather. Still, I twisted my hair up and settled the hat on my head. Hopefully, from afar, I would be mistaken for a boy.

Being a woman alone in the wilderness was practically a death sentence, one I prayed I could avoid. But I had to run.

And run I did.

End
file.